“Why do we…sex?”

Nature & Nurture

Nature: Evolutionary explanations/hormones/ biology, etc.

Nurture: Culture/ Learning/Experiences/ Environment, etc.

Men are more open to *casual sex*; want more sexual partners

Men most often *initiate sex*

Men are more likely to perceive *"friendliness"* as a sexual come-on

“Sexual *Identity*”

Self-defined *sexual meaning*: internalized, personal interpretations of sexual experiences, cultural norms, and personal beliefs

“Sexual *Identity*”

“Who am I?” as it relates to sexuality

Both *biological* *and* influenced by *experience*

Sexual Identity – From Culture

How do we define “sex”?

What sexual behaviors are acceptable?

When should we have sex?

JAMA®
The Journal of the American Medical Association

Would You Say You "Had Sex" If . . . ?

Stephanie A. Sanders, PhD
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Context The current public debate regarding whether oral sex constitutes having "had sex" or sexual relations has reflected a lack of empirical data on how Americans as a population define these terms.

Objective To determine which interactions individuals would consider as having "had sex."

Methods A question was included in a survey conducted in 1991 that explored sexual behaviors and attitudes among a random stratified sample of 599 students representative of the undergraduate population of a state university in the Midwest.

Participants The participants originated from 29 states, including all 4 US Census Bureau geographic regions. Approximately 79% classified themselves as politically moderate to conservative.

Main Outcome Measure Percentage of respondents who believed the interaction described constituted having "had sex."

Results Individual attitudes varied regarding behaviors defined as having "had sex": 59% (95% confidence interval, 54%-63%) of respondents indicated that oral-genital contact did not constitute having "had sex" with a partner. Nineteen percent responded similarly regarding penile-anal intercourse.

Conclusions The findings support the view that Americans hold widely divergent opinions about what behaviors do and do not constitute having "had sex."

JAMA. 1999;281:275-277 www.jama.com

THE DEGREE TO WHICH INDIVIDUals vary with respect to the behavioral criteria involved in labeling an interaction as having "had sex" has implications for both clinical and research purposes. Recent public discourse regarding whether oral-genital contact constitutes having "had sex" highlights the importance of explicit criteria in contrast with implicit assumptions in this area. Unfortunately, a review of the literature demonstrates that empirical exploration of what is included in definitions of having "had sex" for the general public in the United States remains scant. Social and legal definitions of "sex," "sex act,"

“The current debate regarding whether oral sex constitutes having ‘had sex’ or sexual relations has reflected a lack of empirical data on how Americans as a population define these terms…”

“…(Conducted) a survey…(of) 599 (undergraduate) students…from 29 states…

“Americans hold widely divergent opinions about what behaviors do and do not constitute having ‘had sex.’”

“Would you say you ‘had sex’ with someone if the most intimate behavior you engaged in was…”

Table. Percentages for Participants Answering Yes to the Question, “Would You Say You 'Had Sex' With Someone if the Most Intimate Behavior You Engaged In Was . . .”*

Behaviors	Percentage Indicating “Had Sex” (95% Confidence Interval)		
	Women	Men	Overall
Deep kissing	1.4 (0.2-2.6) [n = 353]	2.9 (0.8-5.0) [n = 245]	2.0 (0.9-3.1) [n = 598]
Oral contact on your breasts/nipples	2.3 (0.7-3.9) [n = 353]	4.1 (1.6-6.6) [n = 243]	3.0 (1.6-4.4) [n = 596]
Person touches your breasts/nipples	2.0 (0.5-3.5) [n = 353]	4.5 (1.9-7.1) [n = 244]	3.0 (1.6-4.4) [n = 597]
You touch other’s breasts/nipples†	1.7 (0.3-3.1) [n = 348]	5.7 (2.8-8.6) [n = 244]	3.4 (1.9-4.9) [n = 592]
Oral contact on other’s breasts/nipples‡	1.4 (0.2-2.6) [n = 352]	6.1 (3.1-9.1) [n = 245]	3.4 (1.9-4.9) [n = 597]
You touch other’s genitals	11.6 (8.3-14.9) [n = 354]	17.1 (12.4-21.8) [n = 245]	13.9 (11.1-16.7) [n = 599]
Person touches your genitals§	12.2 (8.8-15.6) [n = 353]	19.2 (14.3-24.1) [n = 245]	15.1 (12.2-18.0) [n = 598]
Oral contact with other’s genitals	37.3 (32.3-42.3) [n = 354]	43.7 (37.5-49.9) [n = 245]	39.9 (36.0-43.8) [n = 599]
Oral contact with your genitals	37.7 (32.6-42.8) [n = 353]	43.9 (37.7-50.1) [n = 244]	40.2 (36.3-44.1) [n = 597]
Penile-anal intercourse	82.3 (78.3-86.3) [n = 350]	79.1 (73.9-84.3) [n = 239]	81.0 (77.8-84.2) [n = 589]
Penile-vaginal intercourse	99.7 (99.1-100) [n = 354]	99.2 (98.1-100.3) [n = 245]	99.5 (98.9-100) [n = 599]

*n is the total number of respondents in each category for each behavior.
†Data are significant at $P = .01$; $\chi^2_1 = 5.90$.
‡Data are significant at $P = .004$; $\chi^2_1 = 8.46$.
§Data are significant at $P = .02$; $\chi^2_1 = 5.01$.

Sexual Identity: "Who I am" as it relates to sexuality...

What sexual behaviors are acceptable?

We learn about acceptable sex through social norms as well as *governmental laws*

Sexual Identity: "Who I am" as it relates to sexuality…

When should we have sex?

Survey Question: People should have sex…when?

Social Script: Internalized beliefs about how to act in social situations

Sexual Script: Internalized beliefs about how to act in *sexual* situations

(1) “Traditional Religious” – When *married*; for procreation

(2) “Permissiveness with affection” – When *in love*

(3) “Permissiveness without affection”: When you can get someone *to consent*

(4) “Double Standard”: Depends on whether you’re *male or female*

Hormones affect human sexual behavior…

…but not as directly as *in other animals*

Attractive Man Funk?
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“Females hate the smell…of males. Androstenedione seems to smell like musk in the beginning, and then turns into a urine type smell.”

Salt from sweat blends with androstenedione to affect the bacteria that lives on skin – influencing body odor

Major histocompatibility complex (MHC) – DNA section that influences which diseases our immune system can fight

MHC (also) affects which bacteria can live on skin, which (also) affects how people smell

Women find men to smell “less unattractive” when (1) *fertile* and (NOT or) (2) very different *immune system* genes

Different MHC genes from each parent improves immunity (to more diseases)

EvoPSY: Principle #2: Natural selection has resulted in brains designed to create *situation-appropriate behavior* predisposed to solve *adaptive problems*

QUESTION: How does this characteristic (to ability to *smell a genetically compatible mate*) allow us to more successfully adapt to our environment…to survive and *reproduce*?

EvoPSY: Principle #3: Adaptive problem solving requires very *complicated neural circuitry*

THUS: Responding to the environment …*being attracted to someone/enjoying sex*…seems "easy"…

…but many physiological processes need to work for us to respond "easily"

Natural selection has resulted in characteristics that improve *survival* (leading to more reproduction)

…explains differences *across species* (lions versus tigers)

…but does not explain gender difference *within species* (male lions versus female lionesses)…

Sexual selection has resulted in characteristics that increase reproductive success

Identifying and responding to potential mates

Summary: Women *choose*, men *compete*

EvoPSY Principle #5: Our current brains evolved to solve *Stone Age problems*

Humans evolved without *contraception* or *paternity suits*

Sex is *riskier* for women - reproductive capability is a *limited resource* for women

Men *invest very little* in reproduction

What women *choose*, and men *compete for*

A wide variety of characteristics…

…personality, sense of humor…

People will *"trade off"* for desired characteristics

Men look for… *(prioritize)*

“Hourglass” figure and *youth*

Women look for…*(prioritize)*

…physical strength…

Status (resources)